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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9386
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5485
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5584
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0452
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4082
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3078
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6309
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0695
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2075
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1110
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; March 24, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo, All TVs
Two Former Officials of Roh Moo-hyun Administration
Arrested for Allegedly Taking Bribes
from Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park Yeon-cha

JoongAng Ilbo
Unnamed Intelligence Source: "Two Female U.S. Journalists were Taken
to North Korea's Defense Security Command
Near Pyongyang"

Hankook Ilbo
Opposition Democratic Party's Deputy Floor Leader
Suh Kap-won was There When Chief of Jeonju District Public
Prosecutor's Office Played Golf
with Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Lee Jong-chan, First Senior Presidential Secretary for Civil Affairs
under Lee Myung-bak Administration,
Uses Park Yeon-cha's Money to Open Law Firm

Segye Ilbo
ROKG Reviewing "Songpa New Town Plan"

Seoul Shinmun
Two or Three Lawmakers Likely to be Summoned over Bribery Scandal
Involving Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park Yeon-cha

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

A senior ROKG official purportedly said recently: "If the U.S. and North Korea speed up too much in bilateral talks, Japan could play a role in 'slamming on the brakes.'" This remark may reflect Seoul's uneasiness that any bilateral negotiations after North Korea launches its missile next month between Washington and Pyongyang might proceed too quickly towards normalization for the ROK's comfort. (Chosun)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The ROK obtained intelligence on how two American journalists were detained recently in North Korea and briefed U.S. intelligence officials on those details. According to an unnamed intelligence source, the American journalists are being questioned at closed-off quarters under North Korea's Defense Security Command near Pyongyang, and they would likely face charges of espionage because they crossed the border (into North Korea). (JoongAng)

According to America's CBS News, a U.S. official said that Washington has contacted North Korea to resolve the detention issue and is awaiting a reply from the North. (Hankook)

Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Wi Sung-lac will visit China from March 24-25 to discuss North Korea's imminent launch and ways to resume the Six-Party Talks. The Chief ROK Delegate will also visit Washington to meet with U.S. officials, including Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy. (Hankyoreh, KBS)

According to a source knowledgeable about North Korean affairs, Kim Kyong-hui, the younger sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and wife of powerful Workers' Party member Chang Sung-taek, is supposedly in critical condition due to complications associated with alcohol abuse. Last year's visit to Pyongyang by a French doctor was actually intended to treat her. (Dong-a)

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MEDIA ANALYSIS

-North Korea

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo gave top front-page play to a report quoting an unnamed intelligence source yesterday that the ROK obtained intelligence on how two American journalists were detained recently in North Korea and has briefed U.S. intelligence officials on those details. The source was further quoted as saying that the American journalists are being questioned at closed-off quarters under North Korea's Defense Security Command near Pyongyang and that they would likely face charges of espionage because they crossed the border (into North Korea.)

In a related development, moderate Hankook Ilbo replayed a March 22 CBS (U.S.) report quoting a U.S. official saying that Washington has contacted North Korea to resolve the detention issue and is awaiting a reply from the North.

Regarding North Korea's imminent missile launch, conservative Chosun Ilbo carried an inside-page report quoting a senior ROKG official as saying: "If the U.S. and North Korea speed up too much in bilateral talks, Japan could play a role in 'slamming on the brakes.'" The paper commented that this remark reflects Seoul's uneasiness that any bilateral negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang might proceed too fast towards normalizing relations for the ROK's comfort after North Korea launches its missile next month. The report went on to say that Seoul also expects Tokyo to play a role in UN Security Council discussions on sanctions against North Korea following its launch, further quoting the official "As a member of the Security Council, Japan has many roles to play than the ROK."

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun and state-run KBS reported that Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Wi Sung-lac will visit China from March 24-25 to discuss North Korea's imminent launch and ways to resume the Six-Party Talks. The media went on to report that the Chief ROK Delegate will also visit Washington to meet with U.S. officials, including Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy.

Citing a source knowledgeable about North Korean affairs, conservative Dong-a Ilbo front-paged a report saying that Kim

Kyong-hui, the younger sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il and wife of powerful Workers` Party member Chang Sung-taek, is said to be in critical condition due to complications associated with alcohol abuse. The report went on to say that last year's visit to Pyongyang by a French doctor was actually intended to treat her.

Unlike moderate Hankook Ilbo's and leftist Hankyoreh Shinmun's notes of caution yesterday on Seoul's participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), conservative Dong-a Ilbo expressed support for the idea: "Following its nuclear weapons development, North Korea is poised to test-fire a missile with an extended range under the pretext of launching a satellite. North Korea is suspected of being deeply involved in Syria's nuclear development and Iran's missile development.

There is also no guarantee that (such) weapons of mass destruction will not fall into the hands of terrorists, such as al-Qaida. As shown in the recent terrorist attack in Yemen, international terrorism is not confined to a certain nation. For the sake of global human security, too, (the ROK's) full participation in the PSI has become inevitable."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

NORTH KOREA PROMPTS THE ROK TO PARTICIPATE IN PROLIFERATION SECURITY INITIATIVE

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(Dong-a Ilbo, March 24, 2009, Page 31)

An ROKG official hinted that the ROK might participate fully in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction if North Korea launches a missile. This sparked opposition from some Koreans. They argue that full PSI participation by the ROK would needlessly provoke North Korea and further escalate tensions between the ROK and North Korea. However, this is an argument distorting reality. Now tensions peak on the Korean Peninsula due to all kinds of belligerent acts by North Korea. Moreover, if the ROK does not respond to the North's blatant saber-rattling through nuclear and missile threats, for fear of backlash from North Korea, it is as if it is giving up its national security. If North Korea continues to resort to threats, the ROK has no choice but to participate fully in the PSI.

The PSI is not specifically targeting North Korea but is an international cooperation system for curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear and missile arsenals, and biological and chemical weapons. The PSI was launched in 2003 under the control of the U.S. and currently 94 countries are participants.

The former Roh Mu-hyun Government participated in the PSI only as an observer because of concerns that its full participation would enrage North Korea.

Full participation means officially joining the PSI exercise inside and outside the region, which aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and related materials, and providing supplies to the effort. Thus far, the Lee Myung-bak Administration has taken a lukewarm attitude toward the full participation for fear of provoking the North.

However, following its nuclear weapons development, North Korea is now preparing to test-fire a missile with an extended range in the name of a satellite. North Korea is suspected of being deeply involved in Syria's nuclear development and Iran's missile development. There is no guarantee that weapons of mass destruction will not fall into the hands of terrorists, such as al-Qaida. As shown in the recent terrorist attack in Yemen, international terrorism is not confined to a certain nation. For the sake of global human security, too, full participation in the PSI has become inevitable.

We need to remind the North that it will have to pay the price of its "bad behavior." Although the ROKG is hesitating to link its

full participation in the PSI with North Korea's missile launch, the ROK's excessive cautiousness would rather backfire. If Seoul is to clearly show Pyongyang that its rash behavior does not work anymore, Seoul must boldly declare its full participation in the PSI.

FEATURES

SOURCE: U.S. JOURNALISTS IN PYONGYANG
(JoongAng Ilbo, March 24, 2009, Page 1, 4)

By Reporter Lee Young-jong

Seoul tells Washington the detainees could be facing charges of espionage

South Korea has collected intelligence on how two American journalists were captured recently in North Korea and has provided details to United States intelligence officials, the JoongAng Ilbo has learned.

A South Korean source said that after their capture, U.S. intelligence officials asked South Korea for cooperation in gathering facts about the detention of Korean-American Euna Lee and Chinese-American Laura Ling, who work for Current TV. The United States tried to no avail to negotiate with the North before the incident leaked to the media. The source said the American

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government had very little information on the status of the two journalists and on the North's follow-up actions. Other than contacting the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang for communication, the U.S. took little action. Washington has no formal diplomatic ties with North Korea.

The U.S. intelligence community asked South Korea for help using the South's humint, or human intelligence, referring to intelligence gathered through human contacts. While U.S. intelligence may be a step ahead in its high-tech satellites and other devices, it decided South Korea would be better able to collect humint. And in a relatively short time, South Korea came up with the information.

According to South Korean intelligence, Lee and Ling walked across the Tumen River, bordering China and North Korea, at 3 a.m. last Tuesday. The narrow river is a frequent escape route for refugees and the journalists wanted a closer look at North Korea.

Sources said the journalists first wanted to stay on the Chinese side, but then their journalistic urge for a scoop led them to chance a border crossing. As their Chinese guide lingered slightly behind, Lee and Ling were stopped by a North Korean soldier.

According to the sources, the North Korean soldier at first assumed the journalists were Koreans. But their passports and other ID cards revealed them to be American citizens. The capture of the Americans was immediately reported to the North's Defense Security Command and to the Ninth Army Corps, which is in charge of North Hamgyong Province, where the Tumen River flows.

After being questioned at the security command, Lee and Ling were reportedly taken to Pyongyang last Wednesday. Each was put in a separate vehicle so that there would be no communication between them. According to South Korean sources, the journalists are being questioned at closed-off quarters under the auspices of the command near Pyongyang. One source said, "Our intelligence tells us that since this involved border security, the command wants to physically detain the journalists." Another source said there is also a distinct possibility that once the current round of questioning is concluded, the journalists will be handed over to the National Security Defense Agency, the North's top intelligence unit.

The sources said U.S. officials were appreciative of South Korea's quick effort and specific information. They also said Korea told the U.S. that the North is likely trying to get the journalists to admit to espionage at the border. According to the sources, given

the North's relentless style of questioning and investigation, Lee and Ling will have little choice but to reveal what they saw and heard.

When their capture first became known, the journalists were said to be on a trip to report on the plight of North Korean refugees, and their reports on the refugees or footage of North Korean territory could work against them.

The South Korean intelligence community believes the charges against the journalists will likely be espionage because they crossed the border. It's a felony that could result in a minimum of 20 years in prison in North Korea.

One source said, "The North will film all of its questioning of the journalists and will prepare for negotiations with the United States."

The source said the North could get the Americans to say they had spied on tape but will release them anyway, which would make the move seem like a goodwill gesture on the North's part.

Another source said it's unlikely the North will physically abuse the detained journalists.

The source said the North would want the Americans, once released, to go home and tell the press that, for all the questioning, they were otherwise given food and a place to stay. That, in turn, would

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paint a less hostile picture of the communist state.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

JAPAN "COULD BECOME KEY SEOUL ALLY IN N. KOREA ISSUES"
(Chosun Ilbo, March 24, 2009, Page 6)

By Reporter Lim Min-hyuk

A senior South Korean government official recently remarked that if the U.S. and North Korea speed up too much in bilateral talks, Japan could play a role in "slamming on the brakes." He appeared to suggest that any U.S.-North Korea bilateral negotiations after the North's launch next month could proceed too fast towards normalization for the comfort of South Korea.

While the South Korean government is not against direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang, it feels something must put a stop to North Korea's brinkmanship tactics, i.e. to ratcheting up tensions in order to speak directly to the U.S. and make diplomatic gains. It is here, the official suggested, that Seoul-Tokyo cooperation comes in. "Japan was once considered a stumbling block to solving North Korean issues," another South Korean official said. "But now it has the most important role."

This convergence of interests means Seoul is focusing more than ever on seeking cooperation with Tokyo. The new South Korean nuclear envoy Wi Sung-lac visited Japan as his first stopover after he assumed the post on Mar. 15.

The government official added Seoul-Tokyo cooperation is important because "the U.S. has no choice but to listen first to its allies, Japan in particular, no matter how important it is to seek a solution to the North Korean nuclear issue."

Seoul also expects Tokyo to play a role in UN Security Council discussions of sanctions against North Korea in the aftermath of any launch. "As a member of the Security Council, Japan has more roles to play than South Korea," he said.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

